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SUBJECT: UNAMID PLANNING CHIEF PESSIMISTIC ABOUT OPERATION'S CAPACITIES

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a November 3 introductory meeting with recently arrived Chief of the Planning Unit for the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) Muldo Urquhart, Urquhart saw a narrow and potentially diminishing window of opportunity to turn around the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) ahead of December 31 Transfer of Authority (TOA). To accomplish this, Urquhart recommended finalizing Rules of Engagement (RoE) for UNAMID, filling in mid-level personnel gaps particularly on the civilian side of the operation, and above all exercising proactive leadership to create a trickle-down effect from Force Headquarters to Sector Headquarters and into the field. Urquhart considered the recent three-sector restructuring of AMIS area of operations and the opening of UNAMID El Fasher headquarters to be "superficial gloss" for fundamental UNAMID shortcomings, a less than promising assessment of events widely regarded as harbingers of Darfur stability to come. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (SBU) On November 4, Poloffs met with COL Murdo Urquhart (UK), Chief of the Planning Unit for UNAMID (replacing COL Andrew Johnstone), and Light Support Package planner LTC Geir Hagnes (Norway).

NEED FOR PROACTIVE LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE

¶13. (SBU) Speaking candidly, a recently-arrived COL Urquhart bemoaned the lack of "spine" and initiative demonstrated by the current AMIS force, which, in his opinion, would make achieving TOA by December 31 all but impossible. Urquhart expressed faith in the abilities of UNAMID Force Commander (FC) GEN Agwai and hoped for more of the same from Deputy FC Karake. Urquhart also looked forward to the arrival of Brigadier General Davidson-Houston (UK) as another means of exploiting the narrow window of opportunity he saw currently available to prepare AMIS for TOA.

¶14. (SBU) COL Urquhart had no illusions, however, about the challenges of making "the AMIS leopard change its spots" and expressed concern in the ability of a handful of proactive UNAMID leaders to reform a largely reticent AU force, which will constitute the bulk of UNAMID troops. They would need to be bolstered by equally competent mid-level chiefs, which, in Urquhart's assessment, were in short supply. UNAMID was relying on the UN Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) for its human resources capacities, something UNMIS was increasingly reluctant to provide. Urquhart singled out several staffing gaps as most problematic: UNAMID lacked a Chief of Operations and a Chief Military Personnel Officer. Hagnes added that the temporary nature of the three Sector Commanders (SCs) and their Deputies also worked against UNAMID, since the current SCs (all colonels) had been drawn from existing (and not especially energetic) field officers and would be replaced by one-star brigadier generals, allocated and appointed based on troop contributor composition without regard for GEN Agwai's planned robust engagement policy [NOTE: Neither Urquhart nor Hagnes offered any indication who the incoming SCs would be but intimated that the UN had already made its selections].

PERSONNEL AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICITS SLOWING DOWN HSP

¶15. (SBU) Urquhart was frank that the only element of Darfur peacekeeping he saw deploying by the end of 2007 was the Chinese engineering unit of the Heavy Support Package (HSP). He dismissed the possibility of the Early Effects Package arriving before December, and he could not speculate on a definitive TOA date in ¶2008. He blamed the "planning blight" for UNAMID deployment on Light Support Package (LSP) delays and turnover (saying LSP staff were "earning money for nothing" during the months they were on hold in Khartoum); and on poor internal AMIS communication, which in turn broke down cooperation between the UN and AMIS.

¶16. (SBU) Both Urquhart and Hagnes agreed that the biggest showstopper for deployment at the moment was the lack of infrastructure necessary to acquire Darfur land and drill for water, among other basic tasks. The lack of mid-level personnel meant that more senior (and accordingly more competent) officers were forced to take the lead on these infrastructure issues, which kept them from their mandated responsibilities. Urquhart again stressed the need for UN Headquarters in New York to complete UNAMID force generation to alleviate the strain in the initial phases of UNAMID deployment.

NOT MUCH CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

¶17. (SBU) COL Urquhart did not regard either the three-sector restructuring of the AMIS AOC or the opening of UNAMID El Fasher Headquarters as particularly noteworthy, calling them "superficial gloss" and overrated. The real achievement, according to Urquhart, would come in the co-location in the headquarters of the major UNAMID players: FC, Deputy FC, Police Commissioner, the Joint Operations Centre, and the Joint Logistics Operations Centre. Urquhart regretted, however, that this was not on the horizon until

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substantial progress could be made in personnel generation.

¶18. (SBU) COMMENT: It seems that the IDPs are not the only ones poised to have their expectations dashed by UNAMID. The bleak picture painted by a recent and high-ranking UNAMID arrival (echoed informally by newly-arrived mid-level UNAMID Civil Affairs Officers) does not bode well for the impending TOA of AMIS to UNAMID. Urquhart's sense that AMIS lacked the energy to prepare for the TOA is part of the problem, as is DPKO's inability to generate the requisite personnel, as well as UNMIS' reluctance to lend its own resources to the operation in the increasingly protracted interim. The UN must be urged to stay the course, and FC Agwai's impending return to El Fasher after his time at the Sirte Talks could provide a needed impetus to keep deployment on track. END COMMENT.

¶19. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ